



ANNUAL REPORT 2014

Promoting Youth Civic Engagement (PYCE)

Cooperative Agreement No. 279-A-00-10-00060-0

Final: November 20, 2014

PYCE IS...

a platform for youth success, a common ground and a way forward

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for international Development by America-Mideast Educational and Training Services. For further information, please contact:
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Youth in Yemen

Youth are the largest demographic in Yemen and supporting them is key to the long-term success of the government's reform and transition processes. Yet high unemployment has severely limited the ability of youth to earn a living and successfully navigate the rites of passage appropriate for their age groups. Their dreams of mobility have been deferred in such a way that there is diminishing optimism about the future. Moreover, fuel, power, and water shortages have led to widespread distrust in government overall and a lack of confidence in local officials. Meanwhile, recreational facilities and other institutions that serve youth are often in disrepair and there are few opportunities for youth to escape this constant duress. Their environment is saturated with longstanding divisions between tribes and opposition groups competing for influence in the public sphere.

Decision-making happens at the local, regional, and national levels between elected officials, ministry and government leaders. Yet youth are not widely recognized as participants in governance, nor are they represented when decisions that affect them are made. As a result, youth neither feel esteemed by the larger community nor strongly connected to it. Though youth are eager to contribute to society, there are few targeted mechanisms to engage this group. Moreover, many existing programs supported by international organizations are concentrated either in urban areas or operate with small numbers of youth who have completed secondary school or university. Thus, few youth programs target those without diplomas, marketable skills, or upward mobility.

Organizations also struggle to position youth as role models, whereby they can help their at-risk peers or implement youth-driven programming. As a result, programs are not widely adopted or sustained in the long term, thereby resulting in minimal measurable impact. Across the country, youth remain unsupervised, idle, and vulnerable, and because of this vulnerability, the long-term success of Yemen's transition hangs in the balance. In order to foster and sustain a recovery, organizations must help youth help themselves. PYCE is well-positioned to answer this call because it is both youth-centered and youth-driven. Indeed, PYCE represents a paradigm shift in youth civic engagement.



PYCE is... a platform for youth success

The biggest obstacle for youth in Yemen is not the ongoing conflict between tribes and political leaders. It is not the lack of public services or the sporadic violence. These are all indeed challenges. However, the biggest obstacle for youth in Yemen are high unemployment, coupled with a profound sense of failure and the absence of hope for a better future. Throughout Yemen, youth are not linked with many opportunities that can lead to their success and, in turn, the success of their nation.

PYCE provides 3 integral linkages to address these challenges:

- PYCE links youth to leadership and development training, where they acquire and enhance marketable skills.
- PYCE links youth to mentors and sponsors, where they can learn how these skills can be applied in the workplace and in youth centers.
- PYCE awards micro-grants and encourages in-kind support from community members, linking youth to the financial and material resources they need to plan and implement community-based programs in their neighborhoods. This experiential opportunity provides a platform for youth to develop as professionals and become successful social entrepreneurs.

Figure 1 (above): Local youth enjoy soccer competition at MoYS Mansourah Stadium in Aden, where PYCE recently installed a solar power system and completed upgrades to improve its water supply. Credit: PYCE Staff.

Many PYCE participants have been recognized by government agencies and businesses for their service and in some cases, hired as activity coordinators and trainers.

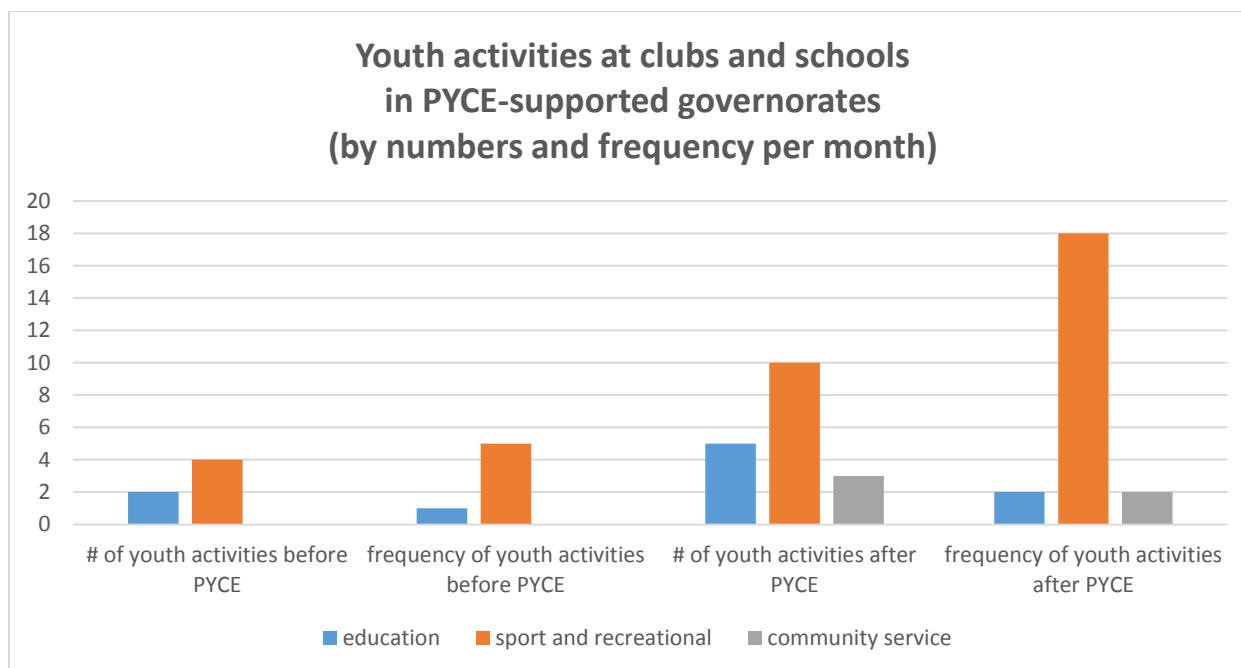


Table 1: A survey was administered to youth centers in five governorates to better understand how these centers operated before and after PYCE interventions. The survey results indicated that by the end of FY 2014, youth centers were hosting a larger number of youth activities and that these activities were conducted more often because of PYCE support. Therefore, the overall capacity of youth centers has increased and with support from PN Members and their partners, activities can be sustained in the long-term.

PYCE leadership and development training helps youth accomplish milestones. Indeed, for the first time, Yemeni youth are developing new capabilities such as:

- learning to speak in front of an audience;
- working collaboratively in teams;
- developing proposals for mini-grants;
- conducting interviews for television, newspaper and online media outlets;
- meeting elected officials and respected community leaders;
- conducting research and needs assessments to identify community needs; and
- using the Internet, social media, and mobile applications to build skills.

As youth reach these milestones, their sense of failure decreases and the potential for long-term success seems more tangible than ever before. With renewed optimism, youth volunteer at clubs and schools, where PYCE supports renovations and helps youth implement their activities. These interventions have dramatically changed how clubs and schools respond to youth needs.

Before PYCE, youth activities were few and far between. Sport activities such as soccer and basketball occurred infrequently and youth were not engaged in education and service activities. However, particularly with gains made in FY 2014, youth centers now host weekly and/or monthly youth activities, ranging from awareness sessions to sport tournaments. These activities are free and available on an ongoing basis, providing a completely new landscape in which youth can prepare for their roles as active citizens.



PYCE is... A Common Ground and Way Forward

The biggest obstacle to the Yemeni transition is the lack of inclusion. Yemeni youth, particularly women and girls, have not been prepared for positions as active and productive citizens. They have not been included in the decision-making process and without substantive economic and social progress, have been overcome by the deficits and divisions in their communities. However, PYCE operates according to a strengths-based model of intervention. Recognizing common threads, PYCE seeks inclusion in 4 significant ways:

- PYCE strives to achieve a gender balance among its direct and indirect beneficiaries. In FY 2014, more than 40% of youth participants were female.
- PYCE operates in urban and rural areas, with a diverse group of youth. In FY 2014, nearly one-third of PYCE beneficiaries were unskilled and nearly two-thirds were unemployed.
- PYCE supports activities which accommodate youth with varying interests and special needs, such that all can participate and thrive. In FY 2014, PYCE participants benefited from more than two dozen types of indoor and outdoor activities.
- Based upon the sport-for-development model, PYCE participants combine sport and educational activities with acts of service to strengthen ties with community members. In FY 2014, PYCE participants completed more than 60 service projects.

Youth now recognize PYCE as a place where they can discover what they have in common with one another and where they can gain the skills they need to move forward. According to this strengths-based model, PYCE offers at least three important benefits to its youth volunteers:

Figure 2 (above): Youth enjoy soccer games at MoE Sadeeq School for females in Aden. PYCE recently rehabilitated the School's multi-purpose court, where students can now enjoy a variety of activities such as basketball and soccer. Credit: PYCE Staff.

Benefits Peer Network Members and youth volunteers

PYCE meets youth where they are

PYCE works with youth and encourages them to improve conditions in the areas where they live. Rather than train youth for opportunities outside of Yemen and contribute to the “brain drain” that negatively impacts many developing countries, PYCE implements non-formal educational programs and awards grants to youth volunteers, who are dedicated to improving conditions at home.

PYCE prepares youth to become decision-makers and participate in the democratic process

PYCE encourages youth to develop programs which directly respond to the needs in their communities. PYCE then supports youth, as they scale up and sustain their own programs, which allows entire neighborhoods to become uplifted together. Their accomplishments have been widely covered in the media and they are now being recognized by their countrymen, as participants, whose voices are incorporated in the process of decision-making.

In July 2014, PYCE hosted *Iftars* in Sana’a and Aden, where youth presented their accomplishments to ministry officials, educators, coaches, members of the US Mission, media representatives and larger business community. In July & August 2014, PYCE gathered youth and Local Council Members together, where youth talked openly about their needs and concerns and presented ideas for the 2015 Yemeni youth development agenda. Youth are also learning about the democratic process, through the election of Peer Network Member Council representatives. More than 10 representatives (PNAC) were elected and are continuing to work alongside youth centers and local leaders.

PYCE provides rare and accessible opportunities for youth to reinvent themselves

Opportunities for most Yemeni youth to self-develop, are either too costly, too far away or too exclusive. Yet, PYCE supports free activities afterschool, on the weekends and in the summer for youth from diverse social and economic backgrounds. These activities are especially important for youth who need second chances (i.e. youth who dropped out of school, youth in rural areas as well as youth whose aspirations were not addressed in the formal education system and need a non-formal framework to build skills). As a result of participation in these activities, youth have transformed from feeling like opportunities for them are quite limited, to providing opportunities for others. Moreover, many youth who were previously unskilled, have become experts in safety and emergency response. Though Yemen is experiencing profound and persistent conflict and is widely regarded as an unsafe place, these youth have continued to improve safety standards at K-12 schools and youth clubs. They are training teachers, parents and students in fire prevention, extinguishing fires safely and removing potential fire hazards. Youth are also learning about universal precautions, first aid, water safety and hygiene. It is now their aim to reduce the number of accidents, injuries and preventable deaths in their neighborhoods.

PYCE is one of the only projects in the country which offers this number, quality and array of opportunities for youth. Our milestones are on the following pages:

Intermediate Result 1: Strengthen and increase interaction between youth and influential community actors, including moderate religious actors

Activities	Former Target	FY 2014 Target	Achievement FY 2014	Total for Project
No. of community actors engaged in governorate level meetings	250	100	513	1,882
No. of Steering Committee meetings	25	10	19	79
No. of meetings for PYCE participants at youth centers	27	10	28	74
No. of community grants awarded to Peer Network members	18	10	63	100
New: No. of partnerships developed by PN with businesses (1.5.1), CBOs & local initiatives (1.5.2) and government & youth-serving entities (1.5.3)	n/a	n/a	1.5.1 = 4 1.5.2 = 7 1.5.3 = 15	64

Please note: The number of partnerships is a new FY 2015 indicator. While reporting requirements begin with the fiscal year on October 1, 2014, in order to illustrate substantial community buy-in and support from Phase I, this indicator has been added to this matrix.

Intermediate Result 2: Empower youth to positively affect their local communities through sports, recreational programs and other community-based engagement activities

Activities	Former Target	FY 2014 Target	Achievement FY 2014	Total for Project
No. of youth centers renovated	11	2	4	15
No. of PACA informed teamwork activities completed	50	16	28	127
No. of youth trained as coaches (SAC Program)	50	30	52	159
No. of activated and involved teams that work with PYCE	16	3	5	69
No. of youth trained in peer facilitation (TOT)	48	28	20	112
No. of participants trained by PN	1,350	300	1,996	6,379
No. of channels of communication by PN	90	0	78	110

The preceding data encompasses PYCE qualitative and quantitative results from October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014.

The PYCE Project, which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is implemented according to its overarching objective of improving Yemen's stability by (1) improving community-based institutions and mechanisms to ensure active participation in governance and locally-driven solutions are strengthened and (2) improving access to and delivery of quality services. To accomplish this objective, PYCE has sought to strengthen and increase interaction between youth and influential community actors—including moderate

religious actors—and empower youth to positively affect their local communities through sports, recreational programs and other community-based engagement activities.

The first phase of the PYCE Project began in October 2010, and with an extension through June 30, 2014, additional targets were incorporated into the Project’s activities. Throughout Phase I, PYCE operated in Sana’a, Aden, Lahej and Marib. In the last few months of Phase I, PYCE further expanded its operations to the governorate of Abyan. Subsequently, and, in keeping with the program timeline, close-out activities were conducted in Marib and Sana’a in May 2014. While preparations were underway to close activities in the remaining areas, PYCE was awarded an extension through 2015. Subsequently, PYCE incorporated the lessons learned from Phase I and embarked on a second phase for the project on July 1, 2014.

PYCE undertook feasibility assessments and determined that Marib was too insecure and operations could not resume in that governorate. However, the security situation did permit the development of further projects in Sana’a, Aden, Abyan, and Lahej. Therefore, meetings were conducted for Steering Committee members, Peer Network members, partners, and other PYCE participants, in order to plan and implement Community Grants and team-based activities for PYCE Phase II and the next fiscal year, beginning October 2014.

With inputs from stakeholders at all levels and positive results from surveys and interviews, the project architecture was deemed well-suited to the Yemeni context and therefore only slight modifications have been indicated for Phase II. This architecture is outlined along with additional data from fiscal year 2014 in the following pages.

PYCE Project Architecture

Cooperation

PYCE works in cooperation with the Ministries of Youth and Sports (MoYS), Endowments and Guidance (MoEG) and Education (MoE), as well as community leaders such as coaches, educators, referees, professional athletes, business owners, and moderate religious actors. PYCE convenes regular meetings, including *Iftars*, with these stakeholders, to 1) exchange ideas, 2) promote PYCE throughout the community, 3) identify lessons learned, and 4) build upon best practices. Many of these stakeholders join Steering Committees where they volunteer along with youth center administrators and other community members to mentor Peer Network Members and monitor renovations and ongoing activities. These activities incorporate cross-cutting themes to adhere to international standards, such as Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They are listed in the sidebar to the right of this page.

PYCE has convened 4 stakeholder meetings in FY 2014 and, through monthly sessions, 19 meetings of Steering Committee Members.

PYCE also promotes public-private partnerships in order to help Peer Network Members sustain and institutionalize their activities. Since October 2010, PYCE facilitated more than 60 partnerships between Peer Network Members and organizations, businesses and youth-serving entities. Peer Network Member Partners have 1) co-facilitated training sessions such as first aid and fire safety, 2) donated supplies and equipment in support of rehabilitation programs, and 3)

Making a Difference

PYCE is preparing Peer Network Members to address the needs of at-risk youth, by leading life-changing education, sport and service activities, according to cross-cutting themes such as:

- Career Readiness and Youth Employability
- Health, Nutrition and Wellness
- Fitness, Sport and Team-based Recreation
- Entrepreneurship and Home-based Income-Generation
- Gender Inclusion and Outreach to Disadvantaged Groups
- First Aid and Safety
- Natural Resource Conservation and Sustainable Development
- Dropout Prevention and Second Chance Learning

sponsored sports competitions and community-based sports teams. With Partners' support, Peer Network Members have implemented 63 Community Grants and trained more than 1,990 youth in FY 2014. Indeed, as of October 30, 2014, more than 6,000 youth, as indirect beneficiaries, have received training from Peer Network Members. Their volunteerism has benefited more than 30,000 school children, youth club members, and local residents as the Project's third-party beneficiaries.

Direct Beneficiaries

Community Grants were the primary mode of programming for Peer Network Members in Phase I. This modality allowed Peer Network Members to work in teams to identify the needs in their communities, and plan and implement education, sport, and service activities in response to those needs. Peer Network Members and other PYCE participants met regularly to develop Community Grant applications and exchange ideas to further enhance their programs. Twenty-nine meetings of PYCE participants were conducted in FY 2014. As the Project continued, PYCE encouraged the election of Peer Network Member Council Representatives to take on a leadership role by promoting youth activities, working directly with youth center administration to facilitate youth activities and mentoring new Members. Together with activity coordinators, who conducted team-based sport competitions, 4 teams were formed in FY 2014.

Anchors for Youth Activities

PYCE understood Peer Network Members required a child-friendly public space which could serve as an anchor for their activities and gathering place for at-risk youth in their neighborhoods. Therefore, PYCE worked with community leaders at all levels to identify youth-serving institutions which could serve as these anchors. However, most institutions were underfunded and in disrepair. Moreover, they lacked the infrastructure, training, and facilities necessary to respond to youth needs. Thus, to improve capacity, PYCE performed a series of renovations at 15 youth-serving institutions, of which 4 occurred in FY 2014. Renovations included solar system installations, furniture, and structural upgrades, along with workshops on safety on maintenance. In addition, Peer Network Members, youth and community volunteers, conducted repairs and service projects, in order to rehabilitate an additional 70 public schools and youth clubs, with 25 in FY 2014. Many of these projects included Participatory Analysis in

Community Action (PACA) activities, which serve as micro-graduation projects for the Community Engagement (CE) Workshop. Twenty-eight PACAs were performed in FY 2014, through teams of aspiring Peer Network Members and youth enthusiasts, who utilized the experience as an opportunity to learn how to plan and implement community-based programs.

The CE Workshop is indeed a springboard for youth leaders and the first step in a series of PYCE's flagship leadership and development training. Once completed, youth who become Peer Network Members can participate in the Training of Trainers (TOT) Program and Sport and Activity Coordinator (SAC) Program. These programs are implemented in cooperation with the National Organizations for the Development of Society (NODS) and Peace Players International (PPI). The TOT and SAC programs help Peer Network Members advance their skills in peer-facilitation, needs assessment, forming community-based teams and leagues, planning, developing, and sustaining community-based programs. In FY 2014, PYCE trained 20 Peer Network Members in the TOT Program and 52 in the SAC Program. These Programs were further refined in 2014, whereas community leaders, workplace professionals and business owners co-facilitated training sessions and trainees conducted field visits to local organizations to facilitate partnerships and future cooperation.

PYCE has trained more than 500 Peer Network Members and these youth promoted their activities through more than 30 communication channels in FY 2014. Indeed, PN Members are promoting their activities on Facebook, local television broadcasts such as *Tomorrow's Leaders*, regular media interviews, and through mobile applications such as WhatsApp. They are also sensitive to the needs and aspirations of youth, conducting assessments, soliciting suggestions and responding to feedback. This two-way communications process ensures that locally-driven solutions are formed and programs are co-constructed.

Programming for Phase II

As a process improvement, PYCE added a partnerships indicator to its list of activities and revised the teams and communication channel indicator. These modifications will allow PYCE to better record and disaggregate the progress being made toward its targets and identify the inputs which are helping Peer Network Members achieve the greatest impact.

PYCE will further enhance its programming in Phase II with the following focus areas:

- 1) Increase the type and number of youth activities at youth centers, including female only times and/or days to promote gender inclusion
- 2) Increase the number of partners that support Peer Network activities to promote sustainability
- 3) Increase competitions including science fairs and exhibits to promote greater interest in science-related careers
- 4) Increase youth participation in the arts and youth capacity to renew their neighborhoods through art exhibits, greening activities and establishing libraries.

Upcoming Activities

Peer Network activities now include more than two dozen sport and education options which are held indoors and outdoors. PYCE will augment these activities with life skills, entrepreneurship and employability training in FY 2015. Additional activities are as follows:

1. Leadership and Training

PYCE expects to conduct a CE Workshop for aspiring PN Members and other youth leaders next quarter. Therefore, a minimum of 4 Participatory Analysis for Community Action (PACA) activities are anticipated on or before November 30, 2014. After successful completion of PACA activities, youth can apply for membership in the Peer Network and participate in interviews conducted by SC Members. PYCE anticipates new PN Members will be selected on or before January 2015. SAC and TOT programs will be conducted for new PN Members in February 2014. Thirty PN Members will participate in the SAC Program and 28 will participate in the TOT Program.

2. Solar System Installation and Equipment/Other Renovation

In addition to this leadership and development training, PYCE will complete 2 renovations. PYCE is currently meeting with stakeholders to determine the sites that will be renovated. Renovations are anticipated to begin in December 2014 and conclude on or before mid-March 2015.

3. Literacy and Dropout Prevention

In support of International Literacy Day and in accord with the Project's cross-cutting theme of dropout prevention, a series of reading activities and competitions will be held for 60 days in several K-12 public schools and youth clubs. Participating institutions include MoYS 22 May Club and MoE Soqotra School in Sana'a, MoE Iqbal School in Lahej, and Bilquis and Waddah Sawahel Schools in Abyan. Literacy activities were initiated in September 2014 and are expected to conclude on or before December 2014.

4. Tennis Competition

Regular tennis practices are underway at MoYS Gela Club in Aden. As a result of cooperation between PN Members and partners from the Aden Tennis Club, Yemen Petroleum Company and businessman Adnan Al Kaff (among others), youth have access to tennis-related equipment and instruction. The first tennis competition was held in July 2014 with more than 50 youth. An additional competition will be held in December 2014 and opportunities for competition in Sana'a also exist.

5. Science Competition

In keeping with the Project's cross-cutting themes such as career readiness and gender equity, PYCE will host competitions at K-12 public schools and youth clubs. The aim of the competition is to encourage greater interest in science and science-related careers among youth, particularly women and girls. The competition will be comprised of science fairs and exhibits, based upon small projects which the students design themselves. The institutions which post the minimum number of youth science projects, will receive educational supplies to augment science and computer laboratories and sport equipment to expand recreational activities. PYCE will provide support for these competitions in November 2014, with fairs and exhibits anticipated in January

2015. Participating institutions include MoE 14 October and Sadeeq Schools in Aden and MoE Showkani School in Lahej.

Projections for 2015

Through these activities, the number of PYCE PN Members will increase to 600, the number of youth trained by the PN or indirect beneficiaries, will reach 7,000 and the total number of youth and community members as third-party beneficiaries, will exceed 40,000 by March 2015. PYCE recognizes this progress as a significant step forward, which ensures greater recognition of youth voice and greater acceptance of youth participation in the process of governance.